

MOTORCYCLE SAFETY MONTH PLANNER

Sample News Release

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New Motorcycle Trends Identified

*Significant increases in crash-related fatalities among older riders
Larger bikes and inexperience are factors*

While motorcycle fatalities are up for all age groups, motorcyclists 40 and older account for an alarming number of motorcycle fatalities. In the last 10 years, motorcycle fatalities have increased nearly 250 percent in the 40-and-older age group, and more than 350 percent in the 50-and-older age group.

Part of the reason for this increase in these "baby boomer" fatalities is the demographic shift of motorcycle riders and the increasing horsepower of the bikes they're riding. Two decades ago, the rider who pulled up next to you was probably about 24 years old and riding a small dirtbike or dual-purpose bike. Now, that rider is more likely to be about 40 years old, and riding a larger, more powerful cycle. In fact, research shows that in the last 10 years, there has been a decline in the purchase of motorcycles with under 500-cc engines. However, there has been a 60 percent increase in the purchase of 501-cc to 1,000-cc motorcycles, and more than a 125 percent increase in the purchase of bikes with 1,001- to 1,500-cc engines. And it's the older riders who are buying the majority of the larger bikes.

"Today's motorcycles are a new breed of road machine," said **[Head of organization]**. "The sheer size and power of cruisers takes a lot of getting used to. In fact, dealers are reporting that new motorcyclists are crashing their new bikes before they get them off the dealer lot."

Other contributing crash factors can include inexperience; many older motorcyclists are returning to riding after years away from the sport, but they're relying on the skill sets they had when they were 20 years old, instead of taking a motorcycle safety refresher course. Older riders' eyesight, hearing and reflexes have also changed and these changes can have a direct impact on motorcyclists' riding ability. Increasing age also brings with it a greater degree of fragility so that in any given crash, an older motorcyclist may suffer more-severe injuries than a younger motorcyclist might, and these injuries usually take longer to recover from.

Alcohol also plays a huge role in fatal crashes, and research from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shows that many older riders involved in crashes are more likely to have been drinking. In fact, the percentage of riders with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 grams per deciliter or above was highest for fatally injured operators between the age of 35 and 39 (39%), followed by age 40 to 44 (38%) and age 45 to 49 (34%).

"Motorcycle riding requires a cyclist's complete concentration and special skills. Even a small amount of alcohol or drugs can compromise riding ability and contribute to a crash," **Local Leader and name of organization said.**

There are a variety of proven countermeasures that motorcyclists – of all ages – can use to increase their cycling safety. Always wearing a helmet and the right gear, checking equipment before riding, never drinking and riding, and getting the right training can make a huge difference in motorcyclists' safety.

During this year's Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, **[Local Leader]** said that **[organization's name]** is pleased to join with NHTSA to encourage new and returning riders to always wear their gear, never drink and ride, get training, and to remind all cyclists and motorists to always share the road.

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